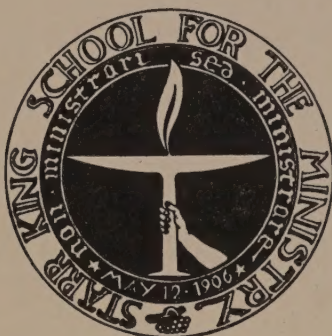


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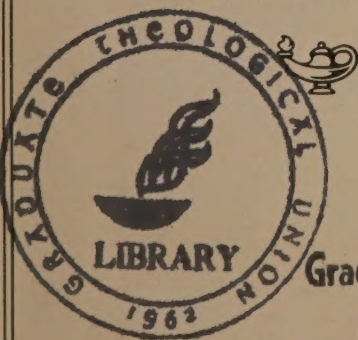
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SHORT STUDIES IN THE LARGER FAITH

By JOHN COLEMAN ADAMS, D.D.



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Introduction

A NUMBER of years ago, that venerable Universalist, Dr. G. L. Demarest, prepared a series of questions and answers designed to give to young people and to inquirers a brief outline of the Universalist faith. He called it "A Universalist Catechism," and arranged it to cover a year's time. The catechism was subsequently revised by various hands, and in 1905 the writer was invited to prepare, in connection with it, a series of brief expositions of the several subjects suggested by the questions and answers. Originally appearing in the "Sunday School Helper," they were deemed worthy of a more permanent form, and are now presented as a series of brief studies in the larger faith which, it is hoped, may be serviceable for those who desire a hint of the reasons and the reasoning which form the rational basis of the belief in the final and absolute triumph of good over evil.

JOHN COLEMAN ADAMS.

Hartford, 1907.

The Winchester Profession

ARTICLE I. We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain a revelation of the character of God and of the duty, interest and final destination of mankind.

ARTICLE II. We believe that there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness.

ARTICLE III. We believe that holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected, and that believers ought to be careful to maintain order and practice good works; for these things are good and profitable unto men.



The Five Principles of the Universalist Faith

- I. The Universal Fatherhood of God.
- II. The spiritual authority and leadership of His Son Jesus Christ.
- III. The trustworthiness of the Bible as containing a revelation from God.
- IV. The certainty of just retribution for sin.
- V. The final harmony of all souls with God.

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I.

What is the First Doctrine in Christian Faith

There is one God, the Father. — 1 COR. 8 : 6.



THE first doctrine of our faith is a doctrine about God, because the beginning of religion is always the thought of God. Men have always been believers in a Power greater than themselves, in a Life outside of and vaster than their own, in a Cause of all things in which the creation and all it contains had their beginning. There are few human beings so low, so weak in mind, so unobserving or so thoughtless, as not to see the signs all around them of a Being or Beings mightier than themselves before whose power they bow in reverence, sometimes even in fear. And the higher the intelligence, the more surely it admits that there is such a Life and Power, and that it is One, not many.

If any one asks for the simplest and the strongest argument for believing in such a Being, let him put his finger on his own pulse, and think what those heart-throbs which he feels must mean. They are the signs of life. This body lives. What made it live? Whence came that life?

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What keeps it, and feeds it, and controls it? All those mysterious forces in action which we call life, point to a First Cause. That Cause we name God.

Or let the questioner think of himself as thinking. Whence came this amazing faculty? Who or what created this power we call mind, intellect, with its attributes of memory, of reflection, of consciousness? It is hard to believe them greater than their cause; it is impossible to believe that they could have come to be without any cause. Therefore most men believe that the Great First Cause must be a Power that thinks. A great philosopher once said, "I think, therefore, I am." We may also say, "I think, therefore, God is."

The world without and the world within both bear witness to the existence of God. Because men realize this Being they become religious — they worship God.

One thought I have, my ample creed,
So deep it is, and broad,
And equal to my every need —
It is the thought of God.

Frederick L. Hosmer.

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II.

What is God?

God is a Spirit. — JOHN 4 : 24.

WE believe God is a Spirit because man is a spirit, and it is unreasonable to believe that God is less in rank and dignity than his offspring and his creature. Man is the chief figure in the earthly creation. He comes first and foremost among living things that we know. But he has this eminence because of his spirit and not because of his body. He stands at the head of the creation because he thinks and loves, because of the immaterial part of him, because he is a soul, a living spirit. His body may be maimed by accident or wasted by sickness, yet his real self is not touched. That body may even decay in death, and yet the real man, the soul, survives and is unharmed.

Now we believe that God is a Spirit because he must be greater and more perfect than that which is greatest and most perfect in us. The stream cannot rise higher than its source, the effect cannot be greater than its cause. The spirit in us has its origin in the Spirit of God.

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It is because we believe God to be a Spirit that we call him a person. We do not mean by this that he has a bodily form; that has nothing to do with personality. We mean, rather, that as we call ourselves persons because we are spiritual beings, so we must think of God as a person, because he is the Infinite Spirit. We think of "persons," as beings who can think and feel and know themselves and other beings and who can act upon that knowledge and feeling. They are intelligent and have affections, and exercise creative power. So we must think of our God.

Moreover, God is Goodness. He is Wisdom. He is Love. He is Power. All these are the qualities of persons. They are the qualities of spirit. And because his life and our life are of the same kind, we can know God and commune with him.

Speak to him, thou, for he hears, and spirit with spirit can
meet;

Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

Alfred Tennyson.

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III.

What is God's character?

He is perfect. — MATT. 5 : 48.



THE more men learn of this universe, the deeper grows their sense of the perfection, the glory of God. The more glorious we see this world to be, the more glorious God appears. The higher our standards of human character, the loftier becomes our idea of the character of God. Every new thought, every new item of knowledge which science gives us, only adds to the honor in which we hold God. Every new acquaintance we make with a good man or a good woman, renders more profound our worship of him who is the one altogether holy. When we have studied our geologies and measured the age of the world, and sketched the forces which have had a hand in its growth, we still say, with the old wonder and awe, "Who hath laid the measures thereof? or who hath stretched the line upon it?" When we have mapped the heavens, weighed the planets, found what the sun is made of, and named the mountains in the moon, we exclaim with more than David's faith, "The

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heavens declare the glory of God." The more we see of the creation, the grander, the more glorious, the more inspiring becomes our idea of its Creator in his perfections.

We believe in God as a perfect Being, because we ourselves are imperfect beings. Out of our imperfection we reach up toward that which is perfect. Out of our knowledge that we ourselves are weak, faulty, sinful, ignorant, comes the conviction that there is a Being who is all that we are not — all-powerful, all-righteous, all-holy, all-knowing — in short, a Perfect Being. It is the highest glory of man, that he is able to conceive of such a Being, and believe in him, and learn to love him more and more. To give up one's faith in perfect righteousness, perfect justice, perfect knowledge, perfect love, is to give up our noblest trait. But to believe in these is to believe in God, who is the perfect One.

Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Alfred Tennyson.

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IV.

Where is God?

God is everywhere. — PSA. 139 : 1-10.



THE wonderful words of this ancient hymn might almost be taken as a summary of men's knowledge of the universe. Everywhere in creation are the signs of God's power and of his constant presence. It could not exist for an instant except for his life which is forever and everywhere poured into it. We are helped to an understanding of this truth by the common things of our experience. The sun's light is falling on all the people in the earth at the same time. Gravitation is restraining the worlds in their orbits at the same time that it is holding down every grain of sand on this globe. The electricity which darts through the solar system when the spots appear upon the sun is precisely the same energy that lights our streets and draws our trolley cars. All the great forces of the creation are everywhere in it.

Still more marvelous is the story of the ether which transmits all these forces. It fills all space. It is everywhere at once; and a wave started anywhere in it affects the whole of it. It

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is the background of all the forces which dart and flash through the cosmos.

But if the ether and all the forces of which it is the medium are omnipresent, then the Cause of which they are only the effects, the Power of which they are only the manifestations, must be everywhere, too. Everywhere that the work of God is, the power of God also is, and the wisdom of God and the love of God. All these energies are working for you and for me. God is filling the universe with acts of goodness for his creatures and for his children. Therefore, the universe is filled with the omnipresent love of God. And in every place and before every object we ought to be reverent and worshipful, because we are in the presence of Deity. We talk of those who are dying as "going into the presence of God." But we are wrong in this manner of speech. God is as truly present now as he will ever be, as surely present in things we see to-day as in anything we shall ever see.

The Lord is in his Holy Place
In all things near and far;
Shekinah of the snowflake, he,
And glory of the star,
And secret of the April-land
That stirs the fields of flowers,
Whose little tabernacles rise
To hold him through the hours.

W. C. Gannett.

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V.

What are the works of God?

*Heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them. — ACTS
17 : 24.*



THE Bible is full of reminders that all things visible are the works of God. Jesus pointed out the handiwork of God in the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. The psalmist calls the heavens the work of his fingers, the moon and the stars the effect of his decrees, all living creatures works of his hands, and man himself the chief of all God's handiwork. He, therefore, who looks on these things with enlightened understanding, sees them as something that Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Love have combined to create.

But with the larger knowledge which we have of these matters to-day, we are obliged to think of what we see as things which God is making before our very eyes. Creation is not something which God has made and done with and left to take care of itself while he goes on to do something else. It is a work which he is still doing. The flower, the tree, the eagle, the

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chick-a-dee, is a present thought and work of God, and when we look on each one of them we see, not something that God has done, but something he is still at work upon. Nature is God working, thinking, loving.

When the sailor at nightfall sees the ray of the lighthouse beam across the waters, he knows that the faithful keeper is tending the flame; and as the light shines steadily or flashes at intervals all night, he knows that some one is watching in the tower incessantly. The light is the sign of a living, waking keeper. So when we look on any of the living things about us — and all nature is alive — we look on the signs that God is at work, the tokens of a living, thinking, loving Presence.

Thou art, O God, the life and light
Of all this wondrous world we see;
Its glow by day, its smile by night,
Are but reflections caught from thee.
Where'er we turn, thy glories shine,
And all things fair and bright are thine.

Thomas Moore.

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VI.

How is God related to mankind?

God is the Father of all. — EPH. 4 : 6.



THE fatherhood of God is the corner stone of the Gospel. All its good news rests upon that great truth; and so it is found everywhere in the thought of Jesus, repeated in many ways and many phrases. The Sermon on the Mount is a continuous call to us men, to be worthy of God as our Father—to be perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect; to love our enemies that we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven; to let our light so shine that we may glorify our Father which is in heaven; to pray always to our Father which is in heaven. The parable of the Prodigal Son, which has been called “the gospel within the gospel,” teaches that God loves man as a father loves his son. Jesus always treated men as the children of one Father whom the Father is seeking to save because they are his children, because he loves them, and because he wants their love in return.

God is our Father because he has created

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us, and because he has created us in his image. He has given us life, and that life is the same in substance as his own. The relationship, therefore, rests on what he is and on what we are. It does not depend on our disposition toward him, nor our faithfulness, nor our love. It rests in God's eternal nature as spirit, and in man's indestructible nature as a soul. We are his children because we are made by him, and are not things, but souls. Therefore sin cannot cut us off from our birthright. Evil can mar and hurt us, but cannot undo this kinship.

God is the Father of all men, not because they are good or bad, bright or dull, loyal or disobedient — but because they are *souls*, in his image. He is not waiting till we are perfect, or well-disposed, in order to adopt us as his. He is our Father from the beginning and will be forever. "We love him because he first loved us."

Though man forget from whence he came,
Or with neglect his birthright scorn,
He cannot change his rank or name,
For he a child of God was born;
Of royal lineage he, and princely birth;
His Father is the Lord of heaven and earth.

Henry Nehemiah Dodge.

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VII.

How does God regard all mankind?

With a Father's love and care. — MATT. 5 : 44, 45.



THE love of God does not grow out of the fatherhood of God, but the fatherhood of God has its roots in the love of God. God loves men. He loves all men. He loves even sinful men, depraved and disobedient men. He loves them to such a degree that he sent his Son to save them. He loves them without return, and even when they refuse to recognize or to acknowledge his love. He loves them with a love which found its truest and most adequate expression in the Cross of Calvary. He loves them with a love which is without variableness or shadow of turning. His love is unaffected by man's sin, which only changes the direction and methods of God's love, but which does not at all affect its intensity or its constancy. It is an attribute of the self-sustained and eternal nature of the Infinite God, which nature is in its last analysis a nature of love.

In Jesus we are taught to see God. In what he did for us, we discern what God is ever

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and always doing for us. In his spirit we see a sign and proof of God's eternal bearing toward his children. As Christ's love for the world depended on nothing that the world had done for him, so the Father's love of his children depends not on their dispositions or their works, but upon his own nature. He loves them because it is his nature to love.

The great trio of parables in which Jesus spoke the very heart of the gospels, illustrates this boundless and spontaneous nature of God's love. The shepherd following his sheep in all its wanderings; the woman searching for the lost money; the father loving the lost son and watching for him to come home — all these indicate that God's love does not lean on man's, but that it acts for itself, and is always anticipating our love by its faithfulness.

In heavenly love abiding,
No change my heart shall fear.
And safe is such confiding,
For nothing changes here.
The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid,
But God is round about me,
And can I be dismayed?

Anna Letitia Waring.

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VIII.

How does God judge mankind?

With righteous judgment. — JOHN 5 : 30.



ONE of the duties of love is judgment. No soul can love another without sometimes pronouncing the sentence of approval or disapproval; and no judgment can be more just and righteous than the judgments which have their origin and their motive in a loving heart. No man could be a juster judge between two than one who loves them both. No man is a better judge of his brother than he who loves his brother in righteousness. The man of love, loves mercy. But so also the man of love, loves justice. Love insists on righteousness; and when righteousness is assailed, love grows stern in rebuke. Love is never afraid of rigorousness, or even of discipline.

These great facts of human relationships controlled by love, interpret for us the method of God in his judgments. God judges men because he loves them, and because his love demands that they shall be true to his righteous-

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ness and obedient to the law of his holiness. God is a just judge because he is a God of love. He judges his children in order that he may save them, make them pure, keep them in harmony with his law and commandment. There is no conflict in his providence, between mercy and judgment, between severity and tenderness, between love and chastisement. They are simply differing phases of one great attribute. God's judgment is his mercy approving or rebuking man, for man's good. God's severity is his tenderness restraining man's errancy and waywardness. God's chastisement is his love exerting itself in discipline and in correction. But all the sterner aspects of his dealings are manifestations of his love, put forth in warning, in rebuke, and in resistance to man's evil.

I dimly guess from blessings known
Of greater out of sight,
And with the chastened Psalmist own
His judgments, too, are right.

John G. Whittier.

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IX.

How does God regard sinners?

With yearning love. — PSA. 145 : 8.



THE fact of punishment is not an evidence of God's wrath. That was a primitive and mistaken view which men took before they grew to the larger comprehension of his love as his dominant attribute. His anger is really the indignation of love, the resentment of purity against the foul and the depraved. And the love of God toward men does not alter when they sin against him. He has not changed his love for sinful men, because he has changed his method of dealing with them from reward to penalty, from tenderness to chastening.

One reason why God loves sinners is because he finds in them something worthy of himself, something deserving of his love. The image of God in which man was created is never lost, cannot be lost indeed, without absolutely destroying the distinguishing marks of manhood. It is this image of himself, this divine spark which still smoulders in the vilest man, this eternal possibility of manhood, sainthood, angelhood, which God loves in the sinful and the

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depraved. This image he longs to renew and restore. This spark he would fan into a glowing flame. This possibility he would make a reality, and so win back his lost child. Another reason why God always loves sinners is because he will not and cannot annul the relationship which he himself has chosen to assume toward man. He who begets a child is always and forever that child's father; and there are obligations growing out of that fact which no act of the child can destroy, alter, or modify. Once a father, man is always a father. So also it is with God. Having undertaken the obligations of fatherhood, he will never repudiate them. He cannot deny them without wholly altering his nature. The lower the child of God sinks, the more impossible does it become for him who is the Father of all, to be anything but the friend, the guardian, the savior, and the lover of that child. "But God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5: 8).

And though we turn us from thy face,
And wander wide and long,
Thou hold'st us still in thine embrace,
O Love of God, most strong!

Eliza Scudder.

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X.

How does God deal with sinners?

He tries every man's work as by fire. — 1 COR. 3 : 13.



THROUGHOUT the Bible, the figure of fire is used to set forth God's way of dealing with the evil of man's nature, and the results of that evil. God is represented as being like a refiner's fire, as refining his people as silver is refined. John the Baptist preached of him as working in his kingdom and its forces so as to burn up the chaff, the dross, the refuse and rubbish of life with fire unquenchable. Paul declares that every man's work will be tried as with fire, and that whatever has been done wrong or evilly must perish. The meaning is plain and impressive. Evil cannot stand the strain of life and its experiences. It breaks down when it is put to the test of trial and adversity. There is no falsehood so subtle, there is no fraud so adroit, there is no sham so ingenious, there is no cruelty so strong in power, that it is not found out and broken and destroyed at last. It is impossible for a wicked principle or a wicked man to go unscathed through God's moral world. The Lord of the harvest may spare the tares till it

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is time to reap, but then he burns them. He destroys the evil. He puts the unsightly thing out of existence.

But it is not his purpose to destroy the sinners. These God would and will save. It is the *way* of the ungodly which, we are told, will perish, not the ungodly himself. God tries our work by his many ways of reaching and testing us, and "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3: 15).

But in the same tests of the years on personal life or the constitution of society, righteousness and they that love it are only made the more illustrious by trial. They and their works will shine out more brightly under the strain. Good endures while evil is purged away. Only the things that offend are consumed in the fires of doom. Nothing of goodness, of virtue, of love can perish.

He kindles for my profit, purely,
Affliction's glowing, fiery brand,
And all his heaviest blows are surely
Inflicted by a Master's hand;
So say I, praying, as God will!
And hope in him, and suffer still.

From the German, by Charles T. Brooks.

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XI.

What is God's purpose in punishment?

*To bring his wandering children to him in penitence. — HEB.
12 : 5-7.*



THE purpose of the pain to which God subjects the wrong-doer is always and invariably the good of the sinner and the universe. The severity of God is the severity of love. God exacts penalty, not for vengeance' sake, but for mercy's sake. He is exacting in order that he may save. When a man attempts to pass the boundaries of right he encounters some form of pain. The farther he goes, the more he suffers. The pity of God is shown in this, that he will use even severity to keep his child from straying, or to turn him back when once started in the evil way. God does not punish us through spleen, or anger, or offended pride. He affixes penalty to sin in order to show his own inevitable and necessary hatred of evil, to warn and arrest the sinner, to make the way of transgressors hard, and help to induce them to turn.

The final aim, then, of punishment is to help

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in the saving of mankind. It is doubtless intended to show God's indignation against sin; but it means more than that. It is plainly a protection to the moral world; but it means still more than that. It has last of all and most of all the reform of the offender as its object. It is a part of God's great scheme to educate, train, and win man into righteousness. It is one element and method of the moral education of mankind. The divine retributions for sin give the sinful soul no respite. It must move on toward its goal. God's severity will not leave us till it has brought us to the gates of repentance and fitted us to enter the streets of the heavenly city.

Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids, nor sit nor stand, but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, but hold cheap the strain:
Learn nor account the pang;
Dare, never grudge the throe!

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XII.

What is God's unchangeable purpose?

The final harmony of all souls with himself. — ISA. 45 : 22-24.

PAUL affirms the divine purpose when he writes to Timothy that God "will have all men to be saved and to come unto a knowledge of the truth." To secure this end is the aim of God's moral government. To this end all the energies, forces, and processes of the creation are pledged. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." To produce a soul in man was the goal of the whole lower creation; to perfect and develop that soul in the life of righteousness and love is the goal of the moral creation. If any of his children fall short of that goal, God's purpose will be defeated and the universe will be a failure, for there will be no such harmony as long as there is a single sinner in the creation. The conquest of evil does not consist in imprisoning and chaining up the evil souls of the creation. As long as they are evil the creation has come short of the purpose of him who is

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its First Cause. Evil can never be conquered save as it is cured. The conquest of evil is the establishment of good. The conquest of sinners is their conversion. The harmony of the creation consists in the disappearance of discord. The harmony of all souls with God means their reconciliation to his will, their adoption of his way. His love will triumph only when it is met by man's answering love.

Through sins of sense, perversities of will,
Through doubt and pain, through guilt and shame and ill,
Thy pitying eye is on thy creature still.
Wilt thou not make, Eternal Source and Goal,
In thy long years, life's unbroken circle whole,
And change to praise the cry of a lost soul?

John G. Whittier.

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XIII.

What is man?

A child of God created in his Father's image. — GEN. 1 : 26.



MAN is God's child by virtue of his creation, his nature, and his destiny. When God made man he endowed him with life out of himself. That life made man capable of recognizing his Father, sharing his thought, entering into his affections, co-operating in his activities. In his reason, his intelligence, his heart and his will, man is the offspring of God in a sense which is not true of any of the lower creatures. Moreover, man is intended for a higher estate than he has attained. He is not a true son, a son in the full sense that Jesus Christ was, until, like Jesus, he renders God a filial obedience, doing his Father's perfect will. But this is what God intends him to be, the end to which he is training and educating man. And so by what he is to be, as well as what he is, and by the source of his life, man is God's child. At present, in his sinfulness and imperfection, man is like an heir who has not come of age; he has not entered into full possession of his heritage. He is only the heir-apparent of the heavenly

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nature which the lapse of time, the faithful training of his Father, the help of Jesus Christ, and the co-operation of all the universe about him, are destined to develop and perfect in him.

The idea that man is wholly corrupt, depraved, and evil, is a total misreading of the real humanity which is born in us. There is no soul in which the spark of God's life, breathed into it by the Divine Creator, is or can be utterly extinguished. Human nature is sinful, but not wholly so. It is corrupt, but always capable of redemption. It is perverse, but never beyond the control of the powers of good.

So we are all members of the great family of the one Father. We never lose our relationship to him. Are we living like his children? Are we doing our duty to him or to our brethren? Have we ever acknowledged our obligation to him who never has denied, who never will deny, his obligation to us?

Dost thou not long to feel the old embrace,
And see love's pity in thy Father's face,
The while those long-expected gates resound
With ringing welcome of the lost one found?
Shake off thy lethargy, immortal soul,
Thy Father waits to bless and make thee whole.


Henry N. Dodge.

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XIV.

What was God's purpose in creating man?

That he might share with his children his blessedness and glory. — EPH. 1 : 4.

E are coming to believe in the creation as the result of God's love. He made the worlds and the souls which people them from an impulse of kindness and tender affection. The scientific people call this universe the product of the Divine Energy. It is the result of God's life pouring itself out in all these beautiful forms of crystal and cell, of bird and flower, of star and man. But the religious people go a step farther. They believe all this energy moves from a deeper source. God's Energy is subject to the call of his Love. He acts because he desires to bless. He does all things from a desire to bless all creatures.

For we cannot conceive that God would limit his favors. What he does for one, he will do with equal hand for all. As the Heavenly Father's family cannot be divided in destiny because its interests all are one, neither

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can his loving kindness be limited, because his motive and will are one. He must deal in the same spirit with all, because he loves all alike. Dr. Gordon says, "God is on the side of every soul he has made; he is for it, and not against it, forever and ever." It is from this conception of the purpose of God that we draw our conclusion of good to all. By this thought, too, we justify our faith that we shall at last find our home in the presence of him who made us that he might love us.

For thou hast made this wondrous soul
All for thyself alone;
Ah! send thy sweet, transfiguring grace
To make it more thine own.

Frederick W. Faber.

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XV.

In what moral estate are men born?

All are born innocent. — ROM. 8: 20.



VERY man at his birth is innocent, but not virtuous. Innocence means the freedom from sin and its taint, which they enjoy who never have come in contact with it; while virtue is the liberty which has been conquered in hard struggle against temptations and won from knowledge of evil and refusal to share in it and love it. Adam and Eve were innocent in their first estate, but they were not virtuous enough to withstand the first temptation. The object of our moral life is to convert innocence into virtue, inexperience into righteousness, guiltlessness into holiness. We are to meet evil and overcome it. We are to learn what it is in order that we may hate it. We are not told that we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven except we *remain* as little children: the condition is that we *become* as children — that we win back the simplicity of childhood by self-conquest and victory over the world. The highest type of soul is not the little child, untried,

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ignorant, and weak, but the victorious Christian, who has fought the good fight and kept the faith. To be subject to temptation, to be liable to its strain and discipline, does not carry with it any blame or any shame. It is part of the plan by which we are to be made strong, part of God's curriculum, to fit us for the works and the privileges of his kingdom. If we are to learn to resist evil, we must meet it. And if we are to conquer it, we must be open to its attack. But as Jesus "was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin," so we are not to feel that our liability to temptation is a sign that we are "fallen creatures."

"What is life, father?"

"A battle, my child,
Where the stoutest lance may fail,
Where the wariest eyes may be beguiled,
And the stoutest heart may quail;
Where the foes are gathered on every hand,
And rest not day or night,
And the feeble little ones must stand
In the thickest of the fight."

A. A. Proctor.

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XVI.

What is man's present moral state?

All have sinned. — ROM. 3: 23.



THE history of each individual soul is symbolized in the poetic sketch in the early verses of Genesis. Adam and Eve stand for the human race and for each member of it. We come to the moral tests of life, unformed, ignorant, inexperienced. The brute inheritance we bring with us into the world makes it easy to fall away from the standards of right. Yet none the less is it true that when we break over our moral sense, we do something which temporarily harms the soul, and interferes with the divine order.

Into this personal loss and fault we all come. We are not all sinners of the same degree of guilt; for some have sinned against great light, others against very little; some have been willfully bad; others have done wrong reluctantly and in momentary weakness. But the universal experience has come to us all. The words of the prodigal son might well have been written as an expression of what every one of us must cry out in his heart, when he

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faces his own conduct, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

But by these very different degrees of sinfulness it appears that we are not wholly sinful. The old phrase which affirms that we are "totally depraved," and the milder declaration of the prayer-book, "There is no health in us," both misstate the fact of the soul's life and misrepresent its condition. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," says the apostle. So we do if we say that we are totally bad. As long as we are in God's image, there is always a spark and remnant, even in the worst of men, which saves us from the hopeless reproach of those old spiritual slanders.

More than your schoolmen teach, within
Myself alas! I know;
Too dark ye cannot paint the sin,
Too small the merit show.
I bow my forehead to the dust,
I veil my eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self-distrust,
A prayer without a claim.

J. G. Whittier.

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XVII.

What is sin ?

Conscious violation of God's law. — 1 JOHN 3: 4.



HERE is only one way of describing sin or transgression. It has many definitions, according to the point of view. Stated in terms that are drawn from the truth of God's Fatherhood, it is the willful withdrawal of the child from his Heavenly Father's side. The sinful child goes away from his Father-God. In terms taken from the doctrine of evolution, sin is the reversion of man to a lower type, from which he has sprung, and with which he ought to have parted forever. Sin is not a physical infirmity. It is not an excess of animal appetites. It is not an error of judgment nor a paralysis of will. Sin is essentially the resistance the soul makes to the divine order. It is a derangement of the moral nature. Its effect is worse than a mere mistake of ignorance or misinformation. For while our mistakes may cause us pain, suffering, tragedy, they do not deprave or corrupt the soul. But that is what sin always does. It is degenera-

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tion. It is depravity. And these terms mean not simply a retardal of the soul's growth, but a distortion of its nature, a diseased and deforming growth.

But the essential thing in sin is that it is "conscious violation of God's law;" for there is no sin involved in the violation of the law which is not known for the law. Sin can only occur when the conscious soul, aware of itself, of the law, and of the power to violate it, willfully disobeys. That is the choice of evil as one's good; and it invariably causes moral taint and corruption. When the soul sins it knows itself to be unworthy.

And good it is to bear the cross,
And so thy perfect will to win,
And naught is ill, or brings us loss,
Or works us harm, save only sin.

W. H. Burleigh.

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XVIII.

What is God's supreme requirement of man?

Love to God and love to man. — MARK 12: 30, 31.



HE apostle gave the reason why the call for love to God stands first in order, when he said, "We love him because he first loved us." Because of God's inviting and appealing love the commandment grows clear and reasonable. It is not so much a command as a permission; it reveals a privilege, not an order. We are to love God not merely because he has a right to command our love, but because he is worthy to receive that love. There is no need to explain to a child who has felt his mother's love why he owes her love in return. Love wins love, and is love's reason for being.

Now this love for God comes first in the order and growth of a Christian's life because it is the source of the highest and broadest Christian development. The deepest and divinest life is impossible without the supply of spiritual vitality flowing out of the mind and heart of God. What we think about him determines what we think about ourselves. We form our character on the character of

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God. The sea from its unresting surface reflects the face of the firmament. When the sky is bright the sea sparkles; when the sky frowns the waters darkle. So man's soul reflects what it sees of God's soul. Man does what he believes his God would do. All our ideas of duty are saturated with our ideas of theology.

From this commandment to the second is a natural and logical step. The love of man gets force, depth, and stability from the love of God. The first commandment is the power, the motive, the "enacting clause" behind the second. With God's love as example and as motive-power stirring in us, we cannot help but love our brethren.

Thus saith the first, the great command,
Let all thy inward powers unite
To love thy Maker and thy God
With sacred fervor and delight.
Then shall thy neighbor next in place
Share thy affections and esteem,
And let thy kindness to thyself
Define and rule thy love to him.

Isaac Watts.

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XIX.

What consequences follow disobedience?

Alienation from God, stings of conscience, fear that hath torment. — ROM. 2: 8.

IT is the nature of sin to isolate the soul. The sinful man separates himself from God and from his fellowman. He loses the peace, the joy, the light, the comfort which come with living in harmony and in association with God and God's true children. There is something about sin that sets a man apart from his Father and from his brethren. The child, conscious of his fault, draws away from his mother. His elders, in the same way, avoid the presence of their kind.

Character separates men more than walls of masonry or oceans of salt water. Good men and bad men grow apart by a law more irresistible than gravitation itself. And bad men sever themselves, as far as their own acts can do it, from the presence and the influence of God. Moral disposition is the most powerful of all bonds, or it is the most tremendous of all dividers. It is either a chain or a wedge. Harmony and sympathy of moral traits bind us to

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others and to God more closely than links of steel, while alienation of sympathy, love of moral opposites, dissent in aim and affections, will sunder hearts as surely as frost will split a rock.

This isolation of the soul becomes to him who is yielding himself to evil, a terror and a scourge. To be alone with one's sin — with the lie one has spoken, the hatred rankling in the heart, the inordinate vanity, the lust, the cruelty, one is cherishing — is to undergo the most terrible form of solitary confinement. The unshared secret of guilt works out in the soul the severest penalties of sin. It is in itself a doom of misery. There is no soul so callous as not to feel it. No lethe of flight, absence, occupation, time, or deeper corruption can make the solitude of sin anything but a dark and dreadful inferno.

So I sit alone with my conscience
In the place where the years increase,
And I try to remember the future
In the land where time will cease;
And I know of the future judgment,
How dreadful soe'er it be,
'That to sit alone with my conscience
Will be judgment enough for me.

London Spectator.

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XX.

What consequences follow obedience of God's law?

Harmony with God, a good conscience, a sense of perfect safety.

ISA. 26: 3.



HE rewards of righteousness and of love are in themselves. Nothing can be bestowed on either which is of more value to the soul than the thing on which it is bestowed. The thought of Israel was that righteousness meant nearness to God and a share in all the divine favors. It meant safety and prosperity and power and blessedness. It was a safeguard, a resource, and a pledge of blessing. To be right, to be in harmony with God, meant peace within and assurance without. And in spite of the lengths to which Israel's teachers carried the principle, it was sound and true. "Righteousness tendeth to life." "Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose heart is stayed on thee." Experience does not bear out in its literal sense the psalmist's declaration, "I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." But all human life bears witness to that other saying, "Mark the perfect man,

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and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." The one impregnable position in life is to be right with God. This attitude ever assures tranquility and inward composure. To be right, to have a heart of love, is to be able to face pain, privation, persecution, and yet to be composed, to be strong, to be triumphant.

This was the transcendent glory of Jesus Christ. He above all men was safe, serene, and joyful. "For the joy that was set before him," the apostle tells us, he "endured the cross." He dwelt in heaven because he walked with God. He knew the deepest joy because his heart was full of love. He was above the reach of fear because his pure heart gave him the clear vision of God and his purposes. He is the perfect type of the manhood described in the first Psalm, "whose delight is in the law of the Lord."

So to the heart that knows thy love, O Purest!
There is a temple sacred evermore,
And all the Babel of life's angry voices
Dies in hushed silence at its peaceful door.
Far, far away, the roar of passion dieth,
And loving thoughts rise calm and peacefully;
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it flieth,
Disturbs the soul that dwells, O Lord, in thee.

Harriet Beecher Stowe.

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XXI.

How may the sinner seek and find his Father?

By repentance. — LUKE 5: 32.



HERE is always an open door of escape from our sins. God will not and man cannot close the way from the darkness of evil life to the light of obedience and of peace. The unrest and the pain of sinfulness are so many reminders, constant and unceasing, that there is no rest, nor easement, nor finality, in the choice of error and evil. Everything in the moral universe is planned and arranged to check the wrongdoer, to arrest him, to turn him back from his course of self-destruction and offense against God. But that is only half the story. On the other hand the way of escape is kept open. God is eternally willing to receive the returning prodigal. The sinner is forever free to turn, able to turn, increasingly disposed to turn. If the will were ever to become impotent to turn, the penalties of sin would be falling on a moral imbecile, on a being irresponsible, and, therefore, not a fit subject for punishment.

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When Whittier, therefore, asks the solemn question,

“ But what if habit bound, thy feet
Shall lack the power to turn ? ”

he puts divine providence in a serious dilemma. If the power to turn be lacking, all real responsibility is gone with the freedom, and the punishment which now befalls is visited upon a nature incapable of doing right; and that is rank injustice. So we must believe in the eternal freedom of the soul to choose good and seek God. But if that be admitted, then we must admit that it is possible that all souls will at last forsake their sins and turn to God. With that eternal possibility in view, who will venture to prophesy that the eternal perdition of any portion of the human race is certain ?

One thing is sure. The power which is ours eternally, is ours now; and now is the time in which we are bound to use it.

Return, O wanderer, now return,
And seek thy Father's face;
These new desires which in thee burn
Were kindled by his grace.

W. B. Collyer.

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XXII.

What is repentance?

Coming to one's better self, and turning from all evil ways. —

LUKE 15: 18, 19.



HERE is a priceless truth of religion, of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in one sentence of the parable of the Prodigal Son. Jesus says of this wayward, sinful boy, "And when he came to himself." There is enough implied in these words to overthrow an enormous mass of false teaching about the nature of man. For the doctrine implied in them is that man in his sins is not himself. They teach that man's real self is good, is like his Father, is divine. Because when this sinful boy "came to himself," his first impulse was to return to his father. The moment he woke from his nightmare of sin, his thought was away in a flash to his Father's house.

We have, therefore, in this phrase, the best definition ever given of repentance. It is simply coming to one's self. It is realizing what we are and who we are, and the determination to be our real selves. It is the turning

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away from evil, and the purpose formed in the heart to "seek good and pursue it." It is "a change of mind" toward God and toward our own evil lives. It is not merely shame; though to be ashamed of one's self is a sign of repentance, and a part of the process. It is not merely remorse; for remorse may exist without moving the soul to rise and forsake the evil which fills it with horror and despair. It is the yielding of the soul to the sense of shame, the pangs of remorse, the persuasions of love, the attractions of good, and its determination to act upon these feelings and out of them, and begin to do right, to love instead of hate, to obey instead of resist, the drawings of the Divine Love.

One thing I of the Lord desire —
For all my way hath mercy been —
Be it by water or by fire,
O, make me clean!

So wash me from without, within;
Or purge with fire if that must be;
No matter how, if only sin
Die out in me!

Walter Chalmers Smith.

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XXIII.

Can any sinner be saved against his own choice?

No sinner can be saved from his sins until he wills to be saved.

1 JOHN 1: 8, 9.

BY this statement we mean that the obedience of the repentant soul is that of the free man and not of the fettered slave. If it were taken to mean that God cannot bring the soul into a disposition it does not wish to feel — that he cannot alter its bearing and attitude toward himself — it would be flatly opposed to fact and experience. The whole labor of God with man has been to change the will of man into conformity with the will of God; and every converted sinner is a witness of God's power to convert an unwilling child into a willing one. From the beginning God has been at work compelling reluctant souls to restrain, reform, regulate their lives and conform them to the life of heavenly spirits. Dr. Abbott once said: "Omnipotence cannot make men virtuous against their will;" and Dr. Tousey very properly said in reply, "It is within the scope of omnipotence, directed by infinite wisdom and impelled by infinite love, so to marshal

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the agencies of discipline, education, and persuasion, as to lead men finally to *will* to be virtuous."

For the will of man does not act independently of motives, of influences, of reason, of persuasions. Whatever happens to a man's soul has its influence upon his will. If his mind is enlightened, there is a difference in the things which he wills. If his emotions are stirred, his will is invariably affected too. The sum of what a man is and what he feels at any moment, is felt in every act of his will. His will is himself let loose, set in action, energizing things, external to himself or within himself. The will is not absolute and uncontrollable. It is governed by knowledge and by emotions. It is free, but within relations. It is not lawless, but amenable to discipline, training, education. And every one of us who has been saved, has been brought into harmony with God's will because his will has responded to the pressure of God's will.

When strife exhausted is, and license spent,
And ye are satisfied that these are vain,
Then shall ye learn of me the law of love,
And I alone will lead and make you free.

Henry Nehemiah Dodge.

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XXIV.

Can a sinner ever cease to be a child of God?

Every sinner bears in his nature the image of his Heavenly Father, and can never cease to be God's child. — LUKE 15: 24.



THE likeness of human nature to the Divine nature is the great spiritual fact which accounts for the outward signs of kinship which mark our race. Men are not akin to one another because they have like structure or customs or experiences or sufferings. They have these likenesses because they are akin, because they have the mark of their common parentage stamped upon them. Children are not related because they look alike; they look alike because they are related. And human beings have common traits because they are brethren, children of one Father. The "touch of nature" which "makes the whole world kin," is the likeness of man to his Maker. It is an unspeakable privilege to us all, who are so often classified according to our weaknesses and our sins, and reminded of our likeness to one another on the ground of our universal sinfulness and sorrow, to feel that the final reason why we are

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alike, is not because we are so easily tempted, not because we love evil, not because we are ignorant, weak, or wicked, but because we are children of the Most High.

Now this image of God in our souls is something which nothing can obliterate. Sin cannot annihilate a soul. Once human it is always human. Degraded it may become, but never destroyed. It may be inhuman, it cannot become unhuman. A man may be brutish; he cannot reduce himself to the nature of a brute. There is no escape for any species in the creation backward and downward. No man would ever treat his idiot child as anything but a human being. So we may dismiss the idea that God will ever consider his image as so utterly lost from a soul that he need be under no further obligation to it.

One band ye cannot break — the force that clips
And grasps your circles to the central light;
Yours is the prodigal comet's long ellipse
Self-exiled to the furthest verge of night,
Yet strives with you no less that inward might;
No sin hath e'er imbruted
The God in you, the creed-dimmed eye eludes.

James Russell Lowell.

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XXV.

What is the mission of Jesus?

To save mankind from sin. — 1 JOHN 4: 14.



THE work of Jesus Christ in this world has reference to a peculiar and unique characteristic of man. One of the specialties of our race is its sinfulness. There are no sinners any earlier in the line of life than man's day. The human race is not only undeveloped, it is developed in the wrong direction. It has not only come short, it has gone wrong. So it has need of something more than progress; it must be saved. It takes more than progress to set a man right who has been traveling in the wrong way. The further he advances, as long as he is moving in a wrong direction, the further he gets out of the way. He must be put into the right path before he can benefit by progress. And so of human life. Before it can gain by its advances it must be set moving in the right direction. It must be set right; it must be cleared of its evils; it must be healed of its diseases. It takes more than mere growth of the tissues of the body to get rid of a scrofulous taint or to straighten a crooked limb.

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So no theory of progress can be a complete one which does not take into account the full significance of man's sinfulness and his need to be redeemed from its curse. Man not only needs to be led; he needs to be saved. Or, we may say that part of his leading must be in the direction of a return to the righteousness he has missed and rejected.

It is to effect man's recall to righteousness and love that God sent Jesus the Christ into this world. In him, God has shown us the right way. In him he has furnished us with the true Guide. By him he will at last quicken the heart of humanity into the Divine life. This is the providential purpose of God in Jesus Christ.

Feeble, helpless, how shall I
Learn to live, and learn to die?
Who, O God, my Guide shall be?
Who shall lead thy child to Thee?

Heavenly Father, Gracious One,
Thou hast sent thy blessed Son;
He will give the light I need,
He my trembling steps will lead.

William Henry Furness.

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XXVI.

How is Jesus proved to be the Son of God?

In him the full likeness of the Father appears. — COL. 2:9.

IT is the teaching of Christianity that Jesus the Christ is a manifestation — *the* supreme manifestation — of God in a human life. Whatever it is permitted to know of God in a human soul — of God's temper, spirit, and will — we see in Jesus. God has poured the fullness of his spirit into a human soul, so as to fill all its parts, affections, and volitions. We do not say that Jesus is God; for that is a misleading phrase. We do not believe that his person is identical with the whole of Deity, so that when he prays he prays to himself, or when he thinks, it is with a mind in which there are all the resources and knowledge of the Infinite Mind. That is an impossible idea. But we say we believe, not in the deity, but in the divinity of Jesus.

If we turn a spectroscope on both the sun and the moon, it shows that they give the same quality of light; for moonlight is but reflected sunlight; perfectly given back to man and without difference, save in brilliancy. The moon is

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not the sun, yet moonlight is sunlight. So Christ is not God, yet his spirit and life are God's spirit and life. We may push the illustration farther. The reason why there is no difference between the spectrum of the sun and that of the moon is because the moon has no atmosphere to absorb and extinguish the elements of the sun's rays. So we see God's nature in Christ's, because there is in him no sinful human disposition to cloud and subtract from the fulness of the manifestation. Jesus is so open to God's love and life; is so pure in heart; is so obedient; that he could truly say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He is the mirror and the spirit, the disposition and the will of God.

O Love! O Life! Our faith and sight,
Thy presence maketh one,
As through transfigured clouds of white
We trace the noonday sun;
So to our mortal eyes, subdued,
Flesh-veiled, but not concealed,
We know in thee the fatherhood
And heart of God revealed.

John Greenleaf Whittier.

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XXVII.

How was Jesus the Son of Man?

He shared our human nature and was subject to its infirmities and temptations. — HEB. 4:15.



THE life described in the gospels is not that of a ghost or a demigod. It is the career of one born into all the conditions of human experience, subject to the limitations of the body, developing in the natural evolutions of growth and training, passing through the trials, temptations, toils of a human life; a true son of man and brother of every human soul. His sacred humanity was the first great fact about him. He was a man of like nature to our own, "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." He is a human Christ. He is a Christ who can be imitated. He shows us ourselves, not indeed as we are, but as we may be and as we would be. We follow him because we believe we may be Christlike. If he were the Infinite God, masking as a man, he could mean nothing to us. Our lives could take no hint from his life. Imitation would be hopeless. Discipleship would be mockery. But we can imitate, follow,

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understand, and love the Christ who wept with Mary and Martha, and was glad with the guests at the wedding feast; who yearned after the rich young man, and burned with scornful indignation over the hypocrisy of the formal religionists of his day; who came to seek the lost, and who forgave his murderers on the cross; who was weary with the day's journey, who was hungry and thirsty, who loved companionship, who sought divine strength in prayer. He came to every man as a brother. He has obtained recognition as the most human of all human beings. He does not enter, an alien presence, into the life of our race. He utters no unknown tongue. His speech is of the old, old matters which have always absorbed the interest of mankind — of good and bad, of love and hate, of conduct and character and life and death. Truly "he knew what was in man"; and he knew it because humanity was so fully manifested in him.

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood thou;
Our wills are ours, we know not how,
Our wills are ours to make them thine.

Alfred Tennyson.

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XXVIII.

Why do we specially exalt Jesus above other men?

For his spiritual endowments, his sinlessness, his sacrifice on the cross, his reappearance after death, his continual ministry in the earth. — PHIL. 2:8, 9.



THE world is witnessing a marvelous turn in religious life and spirit. It is the new and keen interest in this humanity of Jesus, and the conviction, everywhere manifesting itself, and everywhere increasing, that on this ground alone, he must be reckoned the supreme human life, the leader of mankind. A modern writer speaks of him as "sure to be the first citizen of the planet, as long as it shall hold its course." In him men are coming to feel and believe that what the prophet called "The desire of all nations" is fulfilled, and that he is meant, in the purpose and providence of God, to fulfill the idea of the perfect manhood, a special and selected nature to lead men into a new spiritual life.

Now a soul thus chosen and set apart for a special work in the moral life of men, has what we may properly call an official relation to the

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economy of God and the evolution of our race. He is a man, as to his personal and individual nature; but he is a man, too, with the highest function which has ever been assigned to a human being; the supreme work and position in the history of our race. He is called to fulfill such an office, under God and in man's service, as no other has had committed to him. In the mighty purpose of the Infinite God, Jesus of Nazareth was chosen to be the world's Saviour, its Leader in the spirit, its Master in the love and practice of divine love. This solemn and sanctifying choice, falling upon this pure and exalted soul, renders him the chief figure in the human family, the heart of its new spiritual life, the controlling force of its destiny, the prophet of its moral future, the mighty founder upon the earth of the kingdom of heaven.

Hail to the Lord's anointed,
Great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.

James Montgomery.

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XXIX.

How does Jesus save sinners?

By revealing the mercy of the Father and the attractions of a holy life; by the moral power of his love; by the imparting of the Holy Spirit. — I JOHN 4:9.



HE power of Jesus to save man grows out of his ability to rouse the soul to new life, new purpose, and new endeavor. He wins man to God by showing him the Father's real face of love, his character of mercy, justice, and kindness. He stirs the heart to penitence by the spectacle of his witness to God's love, in his death upon the cross. He is an example in all the Christian life. But he is more than an example and more than a witness. He is a life-bringer. He is and has been a vital power in the world ever since he came into it. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." He is the new man, and his life has made new men. He has imparted that life to men. Great individuals have manifested its power; humble hearts have shared all its grace and glory. That life was communicated and passed on to other souls when Paul was transformed by it into the great

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apostle, and Augustine into the devout teacher of souls, and Luther into the deliverer of the faith. Multitudes have received from him that same touch of renewing life. Just as human lives have been saved by the transfusion of blood from one human being in full health to another, weak, sinking, dying, so Jesus has anointed and quickened the children of men by the imparting of his personal spirit. He has put the very flow and pulse of a new life into human souls, and raised them from the death of trespasses and sins.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "I am this dark world's light;
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise.
 And all thy day be bright."
I looked to Jesus and I found
 In him my Star, my Sun;
And in that life of light I'll walk
 Till traveling days are done.

Horatius Bonar.

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XXX.

What is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the presence of God in the soul of man.

JOHN 16 ; 7.



WHEN God created us he made us potentially his children in spirit and in disposition, as we are in substance. But he left the development of his image to the coöperation of our wills with his, working through our life, our experience, our joys, and our sorrows, our discipline and our successes. And that manifestation of God which works upon us from within, we call in the language of scripture the Holy Spirit. It is God asserting himself in the soul and its life. It is the Power which moves and fills the prophet when he utters the oracles of God. It is the Power which controls the martyr when he gives his body a willing sacrifice in witness of God's truth or man's holy causes. It is the Power that sustains the devout and the reverent soul in its encounters with temptation, with doubt, with disaster, and with death. It is the Power which showed itself in its fullness in Jesus Christ, controlling all his impulses, enlightening

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his understanding, beating in his heart of love. It is the Power which takes possession of every one of us when we receive the Gospel of Jesus, enter into his life and do his commandments. The Holy Spirit is not a "Person," as we understand that word. But it is the Power of a Person. It is not a Being, distinct from the Father and from the Son. It is an attribute of the Father, manifest in his Son Jesus the Christ and in all his sons who are growing into the image of Jesus Christ, and working, though not yet manifest, in all his sons, even those who are still lost in the hells of sin and waywardness. It is the life of God manifesting itself in the life of every man, and finally triumphing over all that opposes man's true end and destiny.

For not in far-off realms of space
The Spirit hath its throne;
In every heart it hath its place
And waiteth to be known.
Then go not now in search of him
But to thyself repair;
Wait thou within the silence dim
And thou shalt find him there.

F. L. Hosmer.

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XXXI.

What is God's desire toward men?

He wills that all should be saved. — I TIM. 2:4.



HERE is no doubt that this is the New Testament view of the wish and will of God. Yet Calvinism, which is still the nominal basis of most Protestant creeds, teaches that God wishes and wills the salvation of only a portion, and that a very restricted one of his children. The rest he wishes and wills to be damned forever! How foreign to the spirit of Jesus, and his declaration of his mission on earth and among men. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that he has given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." The question as to what you believe about human destiny resolves itself into a question as to whether you believe God's will is to be fulfilled in his own creation, or whether he is to be outwitted, outwrought, and outwilled by his creature and his child. A sovereign God must be a successful God; and the success of God

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means the spiritual safety, at last, of all the souls which his love has brought into being.

Have thou courage, do not falter,
God his purpose will not alter,
Let thy heart be undismayed;
Death from his pale horse unseated,
Hell destroyed and sin defeated,
Love triumphant, joy completed,
God by all shall be obeyed!

Henry Nehemiah Dodge.

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XXXII.

How is God accomplishing his will?

God through Christ is reconciling the world unto himself.

II COR. 5:17-19.



THE process of salvation is, in one sense, a work which involves all God's creation, from the very beginning. If we believe that the soul of man is the goal toward which creation has been traveling from the outset — that all things have combined and conspired to produce this consummate flower and fruit on the tree of life — then it follows that the perfecting of that soul is included in this divine process. And whatsoever helps toward the formation of man, whatsoever aids in man's improvement, either in his physical or moral and spiritual life, is a part of the process, also. All physical evolution, all historical events, all the forces of matter and of mind, are involved in the work of man's redemption from sin. Because the creation is a unit, its forces all run in one channel. So when the nebulae began to stir, "and the spirit of God moved on the face of the waters," the first forces were put in motion for man's salvation. Because that power beats to-day in every

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atom and every cell, all cells and all atoms have their influence on the life of every soul. God began work early; he had millions of years the start of man in his great preparations. When the human race appeared, new forces began their work for the same great end. All men and all events have conspired to win man to a knowledge of God, and a consent to his will.

The crowning act in this process is the coming of Jesus the Christ into the world to be its true Light and Guide and Inspiration. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews set forth this splendid truth in his words, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." In Christ is the climax and the summing up and the interpretation of all the process that has gone before; and his work is not a new one, but the perfecting of what has been going on from the beginning. As he said himself, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

Heaven preserve us from all straying, guide our wish and
guide our way,
Join for us the lost connection, where all nature's currents
blend
With the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

George L. Raymond.

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XXXIII.

Will Christ fail to complete his divine work?

He will draw all men unto himself, he will find the last wanderer. — JOHN 12:32; LUKE 15:4.

IT is not conceivable that with all the powers of the creation backing and reinforcing his work, Jesus Christ can fail! The power which made the worlds and has called man to his eternal march onward and upward, and has bent all forces and powers, great and small, past and present, in time and in eternity, atoms, souls, angels, and archangels, to this one great end, is the same that is working by the Holy Spirit in and through Jesus Christ for the salvation, the sanctification, the perfection of all human spirits. It is this Power that every one has to meet and reckon with. Is this Power, which the race as a whole cannot resist, to be met and defied by any individual in that race? It cannot be thought of!

Therefore we believe that Jesus Christ is destined to be the Saviour of the whole world, of all men, of every one of us. There are no limits of election or of selection to fetter his love

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or circumscribe his power. This work is not to supply God with an aristocracy of saints, but to lead all men into the fullness of the divine life. It is to glorify God by saving all men. The song which is to utter the triumph and the bliss of the kingdom of God is one which will include the voice of every sentient being. It is a universal anthem. Its burden is praise. It is broken by none of the discords of hell: no cries of the lost, no shouts of the defiant and rebellious. The goal of the race is redemption. The work of redemption includes all. The Saviour will continue his work until it is a perfect work. "And when all things are subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

O let that glorious anthem swell,
Let host to host the triumph tell,
That not one rebel heart remains,
But over all the Saviour reigns!

Mrs. Voke.

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XXXIV.

How is salvation to be found in Christ?

By believing in him, by following him, by opening mind and heart to his influence. — EPH. 1: 10.



THE salvation which Jesus effects, is wrought by the double force of Light and Life. It comes for one way, by knowledge, by spiritual illuminations. "The Light shineth in the darkness." Knowledge is not the whole of salvation, but it is the first step toward it. The more man knows of God, and of the creation in which he is living and of his own soul, the nearer he is to salvation, because as he comes to know God, he learns to imitate him; and as he understands the world he lives in, he comes into conformity to its laws; and as he comes to know himself, he also learns to respect himself. And Jesus Christ has brought new knowledge to men — knowledge about God, about man's sonship, about the soul's destiny. The light he brought is slowly, but surely, transforming the world, by transforming individual souls.

But his power to save lies as well in the power of a life — a life exerted directly on each of us;

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a life influencing us indirectly, through those who have before us learned his secret and mastered his method. Personal character conveys learning, best of all mediums. The good teacher succeeds through his own personality. And herein is the chief source of the Master's power.

Our faith in Christ, to be a "saving faith" must mean more than a mental conviction that the gospel accounts of him are true, and that he taught correct doctrines. It must mean more than a conviction that he was a price paid for God's good will, the agent of a bargain with God, the commissioner who closes a treaty with God for our safety. It must mean that we really take him as our Guide in a hard way, as our truth in a perplexing world, as our life in the midst of spiritual deadness. This is the faith that saves "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Thou art the way, the truth, the life,
Grant us to know that way,
That truth to keep, that life to win
Which leads to endless day.

George Washington Doane.

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XXXV.

What is our debt to Christ?

By giving his life for us he made us beyond measure his debtors. — I PET. 2:21-25.



THE moral and spiritual life of the world to-day is unspeakably blessed and enriched by the ideals and the spirit which it has received as the direct gift of Jesus Christ; and what belongs to the whole world, and constitutes its debt to Jesus, is the personal possession and debt of every one of us, individually. This name stands for the things which are dearest to the hearts of the best and most enlightened nations, and of the best men and women of every nation. The world knows his teaching and honors it and reaches toward it. The common people turn to him and love his spirit. In every statute book we may read law upon law conceived and framed in deference to his authority. Our daily life is lightened and comforted and made smoother by his presence and influence. The business of men tries to conform itself to the higher standards of conduct he has set up. The councils of the nations pay at least an outward

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deference to his word, and begin to lean on his law. Our homes are sweeter, our cities are safer, our governments are more humane, our personal lives are happier, by the life and death of Jesus Christ for man. Far above all that men have done to make our bodily life more comfortable, wholesome, and safe, to put food in our mouths, clothes on our backs, and comfort into our surroundings, are the moral blessings which make us realize our sonship in God's family, our power over sin and death, our title to an immortality of joy and peace. And all these high gifts of our lives come to us through Jesus and his gospel.

Peoples and realms of every tongue
Dwell on his love with sweetest song,
And infant voices shall proclaim
Their early blessings on his name.

Blessings abound where'er he reigns;
The prisoner leaps to loose his chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest.

Isaac Watts.

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XXXVI.

What in response to Jesus' love for us should we gladly do?

Confess his name and serve his cause. — MATT. 10:32, 33.



THE moral sequel of privilege is duty. The Christian ideal is to show one's faith by one's works and one's privilege by one's service. He who has, is expected to give, and he who is taught, to teach others. The disciple of Jesus must go and make other disciples. And he who has been enriched out of the divinest of lives, should himself bear the treasure which is his, to other hearts.

One of the reasons why we are expected to show our obligation to Christ is the simple sense of justice. When one has been helped, he owes recognition to his helper. When he has been enriched, gratitude and honesty both impel him to acknowledge his debt. It is counted but a very small virtue to admit our obligations, but a very grave fault to deny and repudiate them. Any man or woman who has been brought to the light of a larger and diviner life by the word and spirit of Jesus owes it to

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him to be publicly counted among his friends and his followers.

Another reason is the duty we owe one another. Those who are striving in a common cause ought to stand together, to make common interest, to join in common efforts. The friends of Jesus Christ ought to know one another, to sustain one another, to be in loving sympathy. The Christian Church is an inevitable organization. It is a necessary outgrowth of this obligation of the followers of Jesus to be in visible fellowship with one another, and to join in the common recognition of their debt to Jesus and their love and loyalty to him.

Stand, soldier of the cross,
Thy high allegiance claim,
And vow to hold the world but loss
For thy Redeemer's name.

Edward H. Bickersteth.

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XXXVII.

What is our ground of faith that we shall live after
our bodies die?

We are children and heirs of our Heavenly Father.

ROM. 8:16, 17.



THE very fact that we can talk about “our” bodies implies there is a real self, which is not the body, but which possesses the body and is separate from it. The self of which we are conscious; the self which we love in other men; the self which we miss when they pass from our sight in death; this self is not a thing of flesh and blood. It is a force, a life, a spirit, belonging in an entirely different realm from the body. We love, not features, but a disposition; not pounds of flesh; but affections and their manifestation; not a form, but a character. The basis of a belief in immortality is a belief in the soul as the real and durable thing about our personality. Only as we believe in our own souls, in the real life they lead, in the value they have to themselves and to others and to God, shall we be able to believe in immortality.

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There is no external evidence or witness which is at all comparable to that which comes from a recognition of the soul itself.

The weightiest evidence which Jesus gives to the soul's deathlessness, is himself. When Paul says, "If the dead rise not, then is not Christ risen," he plants his faith and ours on the firmest foundation. It is impossible, in a rational universe, to conceive that such a nature can perish. To believe in annihilation at death is to believe that that mind is extinguished, those affections cold, that will destroyed. And such a conclusion is appalling. When we get a true idea of what our sonship means, as we see it manifested in Jesus Christ, we cannot doubt our immortality because we cannot doubt his.

Let go the breath!
There is no death
To the living soul, nor loss, nor harm.
Not of the clod
Is the life of God;
Let it mount as it will from form to form.

Charles G. Ames.

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XXXVIII.

How has our heirship of immortality been confirmed to us?

By the resurrection and reappearance of Christ. — I COR. 15:20.



THE new faith in immortality, which is characteristic of our modern life, is traceable directly to the grave of Jesus. It was there and in what happened there, that a new faith was born in the hearts of the disciples, a belief that he had overcome death, that he was with them again, that as he lived they should live also. The world has not built its belief in his resurrection out of any philosophy or any theory of life: it has built its philosophies and its practical doctrines on a belief in his resurrection. Because men believe that Jesus survived the death of the cross, and reappeared in some way to his friends, and still lives with God in the supreme life of the unseen world, they live in trust and they die in peace; they bear the yoke of sorrow and hardship and they maintain a serene and victorious courage; they forswear the body and its appetites, and they learn to make the higher world of love and truth and service and sacrifice, their proper

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home. The faith in the resurrection fortifies our faith in immortality; and our faith in immortality strengthens our faith in the resurrection. It is impossible to account for the existence of the Christian Church or the faith it holds except on the ground that Jesus was manifested to his disciples after his death. It is impossible to account for this manifestation, except on the ground that death does not end all, and that the soul survives the shock of the body's dissolution. The one message which the early apostles of Christianity had for the world was "Jesus and the resurrection." That was the word which had transformed them. That was the word which transformed the Roman Empire. That remains the transforming and the transfiguring gospel which commands the loving faith of the generations.

Sad were the life we must part with to-morrow
If tears were our birthright and death were our end;
But Jesus hath cheered the dark valley of sorrow,
And bade us, immortal to heaven ascend.
Lift, then, your glad voices in triumph on high,
For Jesus hath risen and man cannot die.

Henry Ware.

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XXXIX.

What becomes of man at death?

His body dies and wastes away ; his spirit lives on. — Ecc. 12: 7.



THE faith in immortality is a growth. It acquires strength and vitality according to the depth of life in the spirit. It can never be built up by logic; it must be acquired by living. We grow into it according to the depth and reality of our own spiritual experience, our sense of spiritual values. It grows stronger as we realize the worth of the soul to itself, to its fellows, to its Creator. It deepens as we come to realize the time which has been consumed in bringing the soul into being. We cannot conceive that God should take so long to evolve the finest fruit on the tree of life, only to let it perish in a short three-score years. We find the soul too highly endowed for so brief a life-term as this earthly existence; we have vastly greater powers and faculties than are required for the needs of our mortal life. We must believe, moreover, that as our powers seem to be fitting themselves for a broader life, there will be a broader life to

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correspond to those powers; just as there is air awaiting the wings of the birdling as he grows in his shell, and light for his developing eyes, so there will be a new and fitting world for the soul, which in these mortal years is hardly more than the embryo of a spiritual nature. We look for a future life to explain this present and to provide it with a sequel and fulfill its unfinished ends and hopes. We expect it, because Jesus Christ, the man with the most thorough and inspiring insight into spiritual things assumes the deathlessness of the soul as the basis of all his teaching. The expert's judgment is to be received above that of all others. He was the best qualified to see and to judge. Therefore we accept his authority and believe in his teaching of the soul's deathlessness.

Life loveth life and good: then trust
What most the spirit would, it must;
Deep wishes in the heart that be,
Are blossoms of necessity.

David A. Wassan.

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XL.

What is the immortal life?

It is the endless life of the soul after it leaves the body.

MATT. 22: 30-32.



THE continual question of the human soul is, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" And the only answer which has ever been vouchsafed is one which must satisfy while it does not enlighten, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, so also we shall bear the image of the heavenly." Jesus himself never gave any information as to the details of the future life. He assumed it, but he never described it. But there are some inferences which we are justified in making, from which we can derive a large satisfaction and comfort.

We have a right to assume the continuance of our own identity. There could be no immortality without it. If our self-consciousness be broken, life for us is ended, and immortality has no meaning. There is no immortality without a self to experience it, and there is no self without self-consciousness. But if we exist as persons, then the universe will be full of separate

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souls; and it is unlikely that they will co-exist, side by side, without knowing it, without mutual recognition. Where we are to be is not a matter of moment. There is plenty of room in the universe. We exist in space to-day; we must to-morrow. And we shall be where God is and in the same creation which he has made so beautiful to us here. The new things cannot be altogether unlike the old, because they come from the same blessed hand of our Father. God's ways will always remind us of other ways of his that we have known. We shall not feel strange or lonesome in that new world, on whose shores death will land us: for the same hand hath made the heavens and the earth. The page of this universe is all in one handwriting. We can rest from all our questions in these great truths.

Let whosoever will, inquire
Of spirit or of seer;
To shape unto the hearth's desire
The new life's vision clear.

My God, I rather look to thee
Than to these fancies fond,
And wait till thou reveal to me
That fair and far beyond.

Eliza Scudder.

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XLI.

Is Christ's work of redemption confined to the mortal realm?

Jesus will continue his redeeming work until all are made alive in him. — I COR. 15: 24.



ESUS CHRIST taught men to think of him as a soul with a deathless career and an unending work before him. He reduced the bondage of time and earthly life and the fear of death to their lowest possible terms. He planned his work for all time, and set its goal far forward in the deathless years beyond the grave. It is a most perverse distortion of his work which limits it to these mortal years, and rules out from its blessed consummation, all who have not won this diviner life while they are on the earth. Death assumes little importance in the sight of Jesus, either in the progress of the individual or in the establishment of the kingdom of heaven. It is an entirely subordinate incident in the process of a work which sinks it and dwarfs it in the deeps of a divine purpose covering the infinite ages.

We are to think of his work, therefore, as going on in two worlds at once. Its beginnings are here, where the eye of man can see and the

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ear of man can hear. Their development, progress, and completion, are in the world beyond the reach of sense. Just as each man's character, while it roots itself here upon earth, and here attains its earliest stages of growth, is nevertheless destined to come to maturity only in the life beyond death; so, too, the evolution of the whole race, the reclaiming of the spiritual laggards, the disciplining of those whom the conditions and resources of earthly life have not been sufficient to reach, will be continued and completed in the hereafter. Redemption is not a process merely of this earth. It is a work of ages. So that as long as there is a soul unsaved, or one that needs the revelation of the Father, so long there will be a work for this loving and masterful One, and so long we may expect him to strive with and for his brethren, here or hereafter.

Thou drawest, All-searching Lodestone, evermore
With mighty sweep from pole to pole,
Increasing hosts from every shore,
Thyself, thy heart, the goal.
But not from earth alone shalt thou have praise;
Unnumbered worlds shall hear thy call,
And high the swelling triumph raise
Till love has conquered all.

Henry N. Dodge.

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XLII.

What is it to be made alive in Christ?

It is to be made like him, pure and holy. — COL. 3: 2-4.



THE "new life" is a life which grows out of the new thought supplied in Jesus Christ and fed out of his mind and heart. To be made alive in him is to grasp his ideas and enter into his spirit so fully that they color all actions and all feelings. It is to love the things he loves and hate the things he hates. It is to enter into a large understanding of the logic of his gospel. It is to rise with him on the wings of his lofty love. It is to see with his broad outlook of affection and of sympathy into all kindred lives. It is to share his profound trust in his Father and our Father so that life will seem serene and safe and sure to us here and hereafter, under all skies, in all realms of the soul's life. We must feel as he did toward sin, abhorring its repulsiveness, shrinking from its cruelty, hating its defiance and rebelliousness. Paul describes the mood of the disciple of Jesus, who has entered into his new and higher life, when he

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says, "We have the mind of Christ." This is our heaven. It is to be of the same mind as Jesus Christ. And it is of no consequence where we are or what we are, so long as we are of his divine spirit. He who has begun to share in that has entered already upon the eternal life. He has passed the pearly gates and treads the golden streets of the heavenly city.

Who hates, hates thee, who loves becomes
Therein to thee allied:
All sweet accords of hearts and homes
In thee are multiplied.

Alone, O Love ineffable!
Thy saving name is given;
To turn aside from thee is hell,
To walk with thee is heaven.

John G. Whittier.

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XLIII.

Will any fail of final life in Christ?

All will become pure and holy at last. — I COR. 15: 22.



HE utterances of Jesus, both direct and indirect, are full of a serene trust which possessed his mind, that the kingdom of heaven he came to found should grow to a complete and universal dominion, and none of the people for whom he lived and died should miss their goal at last. It is difficult to give any other than their exact and full meaning to his words: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"; or to his declaration, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." We are bound, too, to accept his sayings at their full value, when he describes the shepherd as searching for his lost sheep, and the woman looking for her lost money, until they find them. But quite aside from these, and vastly more convincing, is the great doctrine which is the corner stone of all his gospel of the Fatherhood of God. That faith can never be reconciled to the continued

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existence of sin and its sequences of evil and misery, forever and ever. For if God be our Father, he is our Father forever, inseparably bound to us, caring for us, working for us, drawing us to himself, giving us of his grace and power, following us with all his love and might till he wins us to himself. In Christ we see the mind and disposition of God revealed. But it is impossible to think of Jesus of Nazareth, who lived to save men, and died with a prayer for them upon his lips, as maintaining an eternal torture-house; and if his mind is the Father's mind, we must think the same of God as of his Son, and conceive of him as never changing his attitude or relinquishing his hold upon sinful souls.

And in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood;
To one fixed stake my spirit clings,
I know that God is good!

I know not where his islands lift
Their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care.

John G. Whittier.

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XLIV.

Why can the saving work of Christ never cease except
in accomplishment?

Because its failure would defeat God and forever darken heaven.

ISA. 45: 23, 24.



THE defeat of God's purpose would mean more than the impeachment of his wisdom and his power. It would mean as well the eternal bereavement of his love. If he cherishes a personal and individual affection for us — a particular love such as Jesus taught when he described God as numbering the very hairs of our head — then the eternal revolt and alienation of any one of us, his children, must constitute an everlasting grief and pang to God's heart of love. Lacking the love for which he created and set us up in this life, God himself must come short of the fullness of his own life, and the eternal sin of man must cast a shadow across the great white throne. The case is no better if we say that the incorrigibles will perish and come to naught. For if a soul could commit suicide, it would have the power of destroying a part of God, of extinguishing a spark of his holy and infinite being. In that case, God would not only be

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made a sufferer forever, in the death of his child, but a loser forever of something taken from the sum of his infinite life.

By the same token, the happiness of the saved would be forever marred by the knowledge of the endless woe of their own brethren. There can be no final good for any which is not a final good for all. For as hearts grow in sympathy, love, and mercy, they feel more keenly the woe of others and are more and more restless under the thought of pain in other and less favored lives. If the hearts of the saints in glory are to grow into the perfect image of the Christ, they will ache more keenly as they realize their own spiritual joy, for those who have missed it. Heaven itself would devote itself to the alleviation of the pains of hell, to the end of eternity!

Shall souls redeemed by me refuse,
To share my sorrow in their turn,
Or, sin forgiven, my gift abuse
Of peace with selfish unconcern?
Has saintly ease no pitying care?
Has faith no work, and love no prayer?
While sin remains and souls in darkness dwell
Can heaven itself be heaven, and look unmoved on hell?

John G. Whittier.

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XLV.

How long will sinners be punished?

Until the divine purpose of punishment is fulfilled in their redeemed lives. — EZEK. 18: 21.



THE purpose of penalty under God's administration, is not vengeance, is not to work a reprisal upon the sinner, is not to awe the spectators of the punishment. It is to reclaim, to reform, to save, to purify. Penalty is a mercy, not a curse. It is the instrument of love, not the weapon of hatred. It is a warning to the sinner to reveal to him the peril of his courses. It is the reaction from wrong-doing, to deter him from repeating it. And by all these signs we are persuaded that it is not endless. If it were made perpetual it would lose all its purpose. For nothing could be more barren of aim and object than punishment prolonged forever. It could do no good to the sinner, because it could have no tendency to reform him. It could do no good to the saints, because they are past being benefited by the spectacle, since they are no longer in danger of a lapse from their estate. It could do no good to God, who cannot be

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conceived as delighting in the aimless suffering of any of his creatures. It becomes, then, a wanton, useless, horrible infliction, doing nobody in the universe a particle of good. It would be the supreme futility of the moral universe, a reproach to the Almighty, and a blot on the world.

But if we conceive of penalty as the restraint of God, hedging the path of the sinner, the resistance of God's laws and agents offered to the waywardness of the transgressors, the deterrent from evil, arresting a man in his perversity, while God's other ministers of persuasion and appeal do their work with the sinful nature — then penalty becomes a clear boon, a divine service rendered to the sinner.

God doth embrace the soul with love, and gains
The good by mercy, as the bad by pains.

Robert Herrick.

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XLVI.

When does a sinful soul begin to experience heavenly joy?

As soon as it repents and is forgiven. — ROM. 8: 1, 2.



OD is always ready and waiting to receive and bless his penitent child. There is no need that anybody or anything should interpose between the Heavenly Father and his son, to win him into loving his own offspring. God does not love man because Christ died. Christ died because God loves man. The sacrifice of Christ had no more effect on God to make him forgiving than the dawn has on the sun to make it bright. The break of day is the manifestation of the brightness of the sun; and the sacrifice of Christ is the manifestation of the love of God.

Hence we may believe in the forgiveness of God as always extended to the sinner. We may realize and enjoy that forgiveness whenever we turn to him in submission and obedience. Repentance opens our eyes to see what is within our grasp. Then the whole blessing is ours. The idea that we must buy the forfeited favor and smiling presence of God by propitiation is the delusion of the transgressor.

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It has no foundation in fact. As soon as the desire to sin is gone, the soul is at one with God, and there is nothing to be wiped out. All that had to be obliterated was the distance of the soul from God; that being annihilated, nothing more needs to be done.

But the remission of the sin does not remit the penalties. Even forgiveness does not wipe them out. But now they are transformed. From punishments they become disciplines. Instead of restraints and deterrents, they become refinements, chastisements. Absolved from God's displeasure the soul finds its pain is softened and punishment transmuted into the sweet discipline of his fatherly providence.

O Love Divine, that stooped to share
Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear;
On thee we cast our earthborn care;
We smile at pain while thou art near.

Though long the weary way we tread,
And sorrow crown each lingering year,
No path we shun, no darkness dread, —
Our hearts still whispering, thou art near.

Oliver Wendell Holmes.

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XLVII.

What is the Bible?

The record of the revelation of God, made through the people of Israel for all mankind. — HEB. 1: 1, 2.



THE Bible is not one book but many. It is a literature, or rather the choice cullings of a literature, which records the spiritual development of Israel, its religious ideas, its moral life. It covers centuries of time, and is written by many hands and from many points of view. But it is a literature with one unvarying central thought. Its record of the history, the laws, the sociology, the moral and religious life of Israel is filled with one common thought — God in human life ruling in all its affairs, governing it, and caring for it, redeeming it at last and bringing it under his kingdom, rule, and authority. This is what is meant by calling the Bible the “record of the revelation of God.” The revelation was made to human souls, the vehicle by which it was transmitted to men was the Bible, the successive writings which tell of the appeal of God’s spirit to the souls of these Israelites, till they came to a knowledge of the Father.

But the purpose of that revelation was not

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confined to Israel. Through this people God spoke to mankind. They were indeed "chosen," but only as the recipients of certain great ideas who were to transmit them to mankind. The Bible is the world's book of religion; and Israel was the world's great religious race; and Jesus Christ, about whom the whole revelation turns, was and is the world's supreme spiritual Master. Like the Eddystone light, which was built by Englishmen, on an English reef, out of English material, yet which serves as a beacon for the ships of every land and nation, so the Bible, framed out of the thought which came to Israel in the course of her own national experiences, is nevertheless a record for the enlightening of the whole family of man.

A glory gilds the sacred page
Majestic, like the sun;
It gives a light to every age,
It gives but borrows none.
The hand that gave it still supplies
The gracious light and heat
Its truths upon the nations rise, —
They rise, but never set.

Wm. Cowper.

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XLVIII.

Why should we study the Bible?

For its spiritual truth, its instruction in righteousness, its inspiring examples, its glad tidings, and its record of the life and character of Jesus Christ. — 2 TIM. 3: 15, 16.

BECAUSE this book of universal religion was gathered and preserved in the providence of God for our benefit and blessing, we ought to accept and use this great gift to man. Whatever change may have come to our conception of the book, none whatever has come to men's sense of its value, except to enhance it. The Christian man of to-day uses his Bible just as his spiritual fathers did, as a record of God's revelation of himself to man — a revelation through the mind and heart of Israel, culminating in Jesus the Christ; as the world's great library of religious truth, as the depository of the word of eternal life, given through the gospel.

Intimacy with its pages will continually keep us reminded of the unswerving laws of God, the same yesterday and to-day and forever. It will keep us in the society and influence of such master spirits as Isaiah and Hosea, of Paul and

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John, of the psalmists and prophets and evangelists all. It will engrave on our hearts the ideals set forth in the Psalms, the Sermon on the Mount, the Saviour's Parables, the thought and the life of the Master of Men. When we fall under the spell of temptation, the mighty admonitions of its pages will be as the very persuasion of God on our souls. When sorrow darkens or crushes our lives it will be the great bringer of comfort to our loneliness and anguish. In the supreme crisis of the human spirit when the eyes grow dim and earthly comfort fails, its divine promises will bear us triumphantly through the mystery till we see the light of the everlasting day.

We search the world for truth, we cull
The good, the pure, the beautiful
From graven stone and written scroll,
From the old flower fields of the soul;
And, weary seekers of the best,
We come back laden from our quest,
To find that all the sages said
Is in the book our mothers read!

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XLIX.

What is Universalism?

The principles of Universalism as declared by the Universalist Church are The Universal Fatherhood of God; the Spiritual Authority and Leadership of Jesus Christ; the Trustworthiness of the Bible as containing a Revelation from God; the certainty of Just Retribution for sin; the Final Harmony of all Souls with God.



THE name which expresses our Christian faith was originally intended to designate those who believed in universal salvation, as distinguished from a partial salvation — the deliverance of the whole human family from sin and suffering, not a mere remnant of it. But when the men who held it began to attempt to justify this faith and to seek its foundation in reason and in scripture, they realized that it involved certain other beliefs concerning God and his relations to man, in regard to which the same comprehensive adjective must be used.

The belief in universal salvation, for instance, rests upon the belief that God is the Father of all souls, the faith in his Universal Fatherhood. That relation of man to God and God to man, is universal, not partial. It extends to all souls. But an inevitable inference from this relation

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of God to man is that he will deal as a father should with his children. He will be as loving, as patient, as self-sacrificing, as persistent in their behalf, as any earthly father. And he will not permit any one of his children to suffer eternally. God's providence means universal good. Another inference involved is the brotherhood of man. If God is the Father of all men, then all men are brothers. If God is honored and loved, all his children are entitled to the same respect and affection. Moreover, as Jesus is God's messenger to man, appointed to lead him out of his sins home to his Father, he must be the Saviour of all men. God could not limit Christ's saving work to a portion only of his family. He is a universal Saviour.

A universal Father, a universal Brotherhood, a universal Saviour, a universal scheme of Good, a universal triumph of Good over Evil — these are the great universals which converge and come to their great conclusion in the doctrine of Universal Salvation.

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L.

What is the Universalist Church?

A united band of Christians, who believe in Universalism.



THE Universalist Church is a modern American movement and organization. It was practically founded by John Murray, an Englishman who came to this country in the year 1770, and first preached in Thomas Potter's meeting house at Good Luck, New Jersey. The first organized society was the "Independent Christian Society" formed in Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1779. The denomination grew but slowly, in the Middle and New England States, until about the year 1800. Then, with the restatement of its theology by Hosea Ballou, it began to spread more rapidly. The Winchester Profession of Faith, adopted at Winchester, N. H., in 1803, was a statement of the principles which began to make their way, in spite of intense hostility on the part of the popular and established churches. While the spread of these doctrines was much more rapid and extensive than the numerical growth of the church would indicate, nevertheless the Universalist Church itself is

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a body of respectable membership, influence, and working efficiency.

It consists of nearly 1,000 parishes, 55,000 families, and more than 300,000 adherents. Its governing body is the Universalist General Convention; and there are twenty-four State Conventions, and a Provincial Convention in Ontario, Canada. Besides these bodies there are ten State Conferences where there are not yet parishes enough to form conventions. These various conventions hold funds to the amount of nearly \$1,000,000; and the churches and parishes own property aggregating \$10,000,000 more. The affairs of the Church are administered by a Board of Trustees, a Secretary, and a Superintendent. The Women's Centenary Associations and the Young People's Christian Union are auxiliary bodies of great usefulness and vitality.

This Church is enlarging and improving its working machinery, deepening its religious life, expanding its thought and its faith, and preparing itself to enter more vigorously and effectively into the life of the new century, in the spread of Christ's Gospels and the truths of God's universal fatherhood.

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LI.

What peculiar obligation rests on all believers in
Universalism?

*To be loyal to their faith, and to the one Church which plainly
confesses their faith to the world, and to live the doctrine
they profess. — JUDE 3.*



VERY great faith in this world spreads and grows through the faithfulness of its adherents. The faith in Universalism will spread only as its believers confess it and witness for it among men. Thus the faith has spread in the past; thus it will always spread. The only churches in which this message of the Divine Purpose of God to all can be freely proclaimed are those which bear the Universalist name. These, too, are the only churches which will train their children in this broad belief, and will educate their youth to preach it, and will furnish a literature to propagate it. The world needs a church pledged and committed to the defense and the spread of the faith in God's universal fatherhood and universal salvation for the

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human race. To sustain and to advance such a church as this should be the personal duty and high privilege of every one who holds the great and inspiring doctrines of Universalism.

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LII.

What message does Universalism give to the world?

We have all one Father who will succeed in his purpose of love. The entire family of mankind will finally attain to the spirit that is in Jesus Christ. Good will triumph over evil, and God will be all in all. — REV. 21: 3, 4.



HIS is a message which has immense practical consequences. It tells of a Father whose fatherhood is more than a name. It gives a great impulse to effort. It makes it worth one's while to labor. It says to us all, "Come and work with God to win his victory." It gives a true sense of the relative strength of moral forces. For it affirms the eternal supremacy of good over evil, its power to win, its omnipotence and infallibility. It teaches that of all moral powers and agencies, "the greatest of these is love;" that it is the invincible, indomitable, unconquerable power; for "Love never faileth." It gives an intelligible meaning to the creation. For any other conclusion than that God will be victorious and evil overcome leaves the mind helplessly confused as to the purport of the moral world. If the moral creation of God is to be perpetually

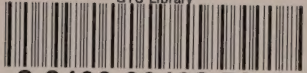
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imperfect; if it is to remain a world broken down and wrecked; a runaway world, which its Creator and Ruler cannot control — then it is a creation which baffles both reason and the affections, as something past understanding, unreasonable and self-contradictory. But if this be a world of souls moving forward to triumph at last, through travail and through trial, rising to self-conquest and righteousness and love, — that is something which we can understand, from which we can take courage, in which we can rejoice, through which we can ourselves grow strong and brave. The great inspiration to Christian effort is in the reaction which comes from such words as Paul uttered: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

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